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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 RABAT 001853

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KMPI](#) [KDEM](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE DIALOGUE: ITALIAN NGO SAYS
PREPARATIONS MOSTLY ON TRACK

REF: A. RABAT 1804 AND PREVIOUS

1B. TUNIS 1892

Classified By: DCM Wayne Bush for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On September 1, Niccolo Figa-Talamanca and Alison Smith, representatives of the Italian NGO "No Peace without Justice" (NPWJ), briefed Poloffs on preparations for the upcoming Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) to be held in Morocco on October 1-3. While Figa-Talamanca and Smith explained that planning was basically on track, and were pleased that invitation letters to ministers had gone out, NPWJ has not settled on a venue for the event but is leaning toward Rabat instead of the coastal town of Skhirat 20 minutes outside the capital. They identified two substantive issues that still need to be resolved with the GOM: first, NPWJ wants to ensure that the Moroccan civil society participants are seen as co-hosts of the event; and two, they want the outcome statement to be a "consensus document" and not a chairman's summary as the GOM is currently advocating. Figa-Talamanca said he had no reason to believe an endorsement of the Foundation for the Future would not be part of the outcome statement, but he recommended, knowing the importance to the US, that the US keep an eye on this issue and be prepared to intervene directly with the GOM if necessary. Due to the unavailability of staff of the Moroccan NGO Alternatives during August (most of Morocco is on holiday during August), Figa-Talamanca explained that Maroc 2020 was now the lone counterpart to NPWJ among Moroccan NGOs. The Moroccan MFA, NPWJ, and the Italian Embassy will brief G-8 and BMENA Ambassadors on the DAD on September 6 in Rabat. END SUMMARY.

Organization of the October Dialogue

12. (U) On September 1, Polcouns and Poloff met with Niccolo Figa-Talamanca and Alison Smith of NPWJ to discuss the organization of the October 1-3 DAD meeting. Figa-Talamanca explained that some eleven staff members have arrived in Morocco to help with the organization of the meeting. He said NPWJ was leaning away from Skhirat, twenty minutes outside of Rabat along the Atlantic coast, as a venue, primarily because of the attractiveness of the Rabat Hilton as a conference site. He envisaged erecting tents on the Hilton grounds for meals and discussions. NPWJ designers, following the theme established in Venice, envisage devising a table arrangement in the form of an eight-sided star, allowing ministers to sit at the same table as civil society representatives. Figa-Talamanca explained the seating and symbolism was important to ensure that government and civil society are seen as equals during this dialogue. While not finalized, NPWJ believes that this arrangement will facilitate discussion and convey the overall message of government and civil society on an equal footing.

13. (SBU) Figa-Talamanca explained that the colloquium (the Morocco event is now formally known as the "International Colloquium on Political Pluralism and Electoral Processes") will focus on three areas: (a) technical aspects of the electoral process, e.g., regulations, OSCE practices, laws, polling; (b) political pluralism through the media, e.g., the role the media plays during elections, how information is disseminated, the difference between state-owned and privately-owned media organizations; and, (c) the status, standards, and role of political parties. (Comment: these are the same three areas noted in the materials faxed to NEA/MAG per Ref A). Underlying these three focus areas is the purpose of preparing civil society organizations for interaction with governmental structures as well as the wider public. Figa-Talamanca stated that the end result of the colloquium is to have the participants endorse that political pluralism requires both the government and civil society.

Issues to Resolve

14. (C) Figa-Talamanca explained that there were two "pending

political issues" that NPWJ needed to work out with the GOM: first, NPWJ wanted to ensure that Moroccan civil society representatives (most of them still not identified) were seen as co-hosts of the colloquium. He said government and civil society representatives would serve as co-chairs for the working groups, and that was also important. The second issue, he said, was to ensure that the outcome document was a consensus document. He said the MFA (Director for Bilateral Affairs Youssef Amrani) was pushing for the outcome summary to be a chairman's statement. He said the MFA "fears" getting into a negotiation over the text. Figa-Talamanca acknowledged that the invitation letters have been deliberately vague on this subject, to allow time for NPWJ and the GOM to sort it out. He emphasized that Amrani does not want the GOM embarrassed during the DAD and accordingly prefers that much of the discussion remains "generic." Figa-Talamanca emphasized that the outcome document need not be ground-breaking or unique -- merely a positive statement on the dialogue and the process, "to which everyone can applaud."

Foundation for the Future

15. (SBU) Figa-Talamanca said he knew how important the Foundation for the Future was to the US. He saw no reason why the Foundation would not get mention and favorable treatment at the colloquium and in the outcome document. He urged the US, nevertheless, to follow this issue closely and be prepared to intervene directly with the GOM if necessary to ensure a positive outcome.

Briefing the G-8 and BMENA Countries

16. (SBU) NPWJ is preparing background papers on the three focus areas noted above. These papers will be introduced at a briefing of G-8 and BMENA Ambassadors in Rabat on September

17. Figa-Talamanca said he had had asked the British Ambassador in Rabat to make a short statement at the briefing supporting the DAD. Figa-Talamanca hoped that NPWJ Secretary General Gianfranco would be able to attend the Rabat briefing, which would chaired by the MFA, NPWJ, and the Italian Ambassador. Figa-Talamanca hoped the King would be able to receive Gianfranco at some point during his visit.

Maroc 2020

17. (SBU) Figa-Talamanca said NPWJ originally wanted a committee of NGOs with which to work in organizing the DAD. He said Amrani, however, was concerned about not being to exert sufficient control over such a body, and had designated two NGOs, Maroc 2020 and Alternatives, as the appropriate counterparts for NPWJ. Alternative members were unavailable in August, Figa-Talamanca said, so Maroc 2020 had emerged as NPWJ's sole counterpart. Alternatives, nevertheless, would participate in the DAD, he hoped.

18. (SBU) Figa-Talamanca said Maroc 2020 Director Ali Belhaj was actively trying to encourage buy-in to the DAD within Moroccan civil society and the media, many of whom had been critical of the Forum for the Future. Figa-Talamanca said Belhaj had met with the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (whose Secretary General had participated in the Venice dialogue) and members of the Moroccan media such as Le Journal editor Aboubakr Jamaï, who had been critical of the Forum for the Future.

19. (SBU) NPWJ hopes as many as thirty NGO representatives from Morocco will attend the DAD, Figa-Talamanca said, since the colloquium is on Morocco's home turf. Two to three representatives from each of the other BMENA countries will attend the DAD. He said the full list of Moroccan participants is not yet available.

US Follow-up

10. (SBU) Polcouns asked if there was anything in particular the US could do at this point to support the organization of the colloquium. Figa-Talamanca said he hoped the US would urge the best possible representation from government ministers. He said it was not critical to have foreign ministers at the colloquium, but really ministers that oversee election processes in their countries.

Comment

11. (C) We will remain in close contact with the NPWJ team

and the MFA in Rabat and report on new developments. Amrani's desire for a chairman's summary is based on the success of this approach at the Forum for the Future preparatory meetings in New York and at the Forum itself. Amrani told DCM separately he intends to share the draft Chair's statement with the US and wants it to be a document that helps advance US objectives in supporting reform.

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